

African Feminisms (Afems) Conference 2018

*‘The Mute Always Speak’: (Re) imagining and  
re-imaging feminist futures*

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Department of Literary Studies in English and Department of Fine Arts

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Collected Abstracts

Compiled by A. Kirsten

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**Day One**

**27 September**

**Keynote Nthabiseng Motsemme**

*“On death, desire and spirituality” – Reimagining the African’s women’s archive*

Chairperson: Sharlene Khan

Dr Nthabiseng Motsemme is currently the Academic Director: Scholarships at the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Her research interests include African feminist and womanist theories; African popular cultural production; township women’s deep subjectivities; gendering Truth and Reconciliation Commissions; women’s experiences and transformation in higher education; she currently serves on the editorial boards of *African Identities* and *Feminist Legal Studies*. She lives with her partner and four children, and mothers several more.

## Session One

### *Jiva Babes: Popular music & culture*

Chairperson: Zodwa Skeyi-Tutani

*Resisting, Reworking and Reclamation of Coloured Masculine Identity: Youngsta CPT, the Hip Hop Icon of the 'Mother City'*

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Hip hop and rap musical productions provide a lens through which representations and performances of politicized identities can be articulated. The development of hip hop music within South Africa revolved around the pre-1994 political struggle. The genre provided an outlet for artists to articulate and rework the experience of the raced, gender, and classed body, within the contexts of the geographically segregated spaces of the Apartheid landscape. As a continuation of its legacy, hip hop's rap productions within post-1994 South Africa explore the socio-political status of the country, with the genre providing a critique of the shortcomings of the new era. Considering the history of rap and examining its critiques, my investigation will position itself within Cape Town, where it is increasingly argued that the city's community is facing disillusionment towards the status of the 'Rainbow Nation' and the post-Apartheid space. Further to this geographical positioning, I will look specifically at rap produced by the self-proclaimed: "Cape Crusader", Youngsta CPT. Youngsta's persona as an emcee and entertainer vibrates with Capetonian pride, where he claims the city as central to the identity of his people. I will be undertaking close critical readings of Youngsta CPT's performance of race, class, location and gender as one of the city's leading 'emcees' in order to more closely explore the workings of masculine identity construction within Cape Town's coloured communities. The expression of masculinity, within the context of the Cape Flats and its reputation for violence, will also be considered as an important preoccupation in Youngsta CPT's work. Some of Youngsta's expressions in this regard have attracted controversy from within his own community, highlighting the significance and complexity of these elements.

The overarching intention of this investigation is to consider the methods used for resistance, reworking, and reclamation found within Youngsta CPT's work, as it relates to Cape Coloured masculinities.



*Imagining Affective Futures in Kelela's Work*

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Kelela is an Ethiopian American singer and songwriter. Her discography includes her 2017 debut album, *Take Me Apart*, extended play *Hallucinogen* and mixtape, *Cut 4 Me*. This paper is concerned with how Kelela's work uses the body, and specifically her own, as a site and apparatus for considering feelings and affectivities. This paper intends to explore how Kelela uses affect and sentiment to imagine and produce bodies that are transformed through various feelings and experiences, bodies that are dismantled and put back together in different configurations. In doing so this paper considers how black women use their own bodies as sites of mediating feeling and affect, and in doing so consider modes of expression that go beyond the capacity of existing language. Through her lyrics and imaging of her body in album visuals and music videos, Kelela places the body through various affective processes in which she reconfigures her body for the purposes of finding modes of expression that can hold space for it. I intend to argue that this is an act of employing her agency for the purposes of self-making with futurities of black womanhood in mind. With reference to lyrics across her discography as well as various music videos, this paper seeks to consider how her lyricism, as well as visuals is used to create sites of experience, processing memories, feeling and healing for black girls in particular.

*Lebo Mathosa: Genre as a Compass for Gender Performance*

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Since its emergence into the mainstream music market in the early 1990s kwaito was closely associated with black youth culture in South Africa (Allen, 2004:86). Historians have suggested that these kwaito ensembles addressed the materialistic and hedonistic aspiration of the black urban youth as well as the tumultuous environments that they were products of (Impey, 2001: 45; Viljoen, 2008: 58). Angela Impey claims that kwaito was produced by black people for a largely black listenership and was the first black controlled music in South Africa thus representing a shift in economic power in the music market in the early postapartheid era (Impey, 2012: 44). Its lyrical content has been cited the main reason for its “inscription of locale/age identity intersection” and kwaito also garnered critique from broader society, for example for its demeaning and explicit degradation of women (ibid; Impey, 2012:44). The latter permeated to the visual representation of women in music videos of the genre (Impey, 2012:44). The implication of this at the time, as stated by Maud Blose, was that the sexist baggage of the „old“ South Africa was carried over into the „new“ (2012:51). Patriarchal power dynamics were thus maintained in the popular music industry where women were seen as neither equals nor as composers by their male counterparts but rather as (and I quote from Blose) “highlighters adding colour through the explicit pornographic representation of their bodies” (ibid). The opposite side of this narrative is provided by Angela Impey who treats women’s participation in their sexual objectification as an empowering method to assert both a presence in the music industry and their sexual agency (2012:44). Boom Shaka in both cases serves as a prime example of these critiques as rapper Thembi Seete and singer Lebo Mathosa, who are the dancers and female members of the band, are both the “willing participants” and the young women asserting their presence in the music industry and their sexual agency.

*An inquiry on the generational philosophy of Brenda Fassie: a comparison between Brenda Fassie and Busiswa Gqulu*

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Brenda Fassie was a South African pop/Afro-pop singer, affectionately known as MaBrrr and the Madonna of The Townships" by her fans. Fassie was born in Langa Township in 1964, one of the revolutionary townships during the apartheid-era. Her 1983 breakthrough hit, "Weekend Special" along with the Big Dudes, continues to be a hit in contemporary South Africa; with the different challenges that are presented with living in a "globalised village". Although considered a disco inspired song, "weekend special" resonates more in African feminist, Womanist and radical intersectional feminist spaces and ideologies. Therefore, what does it mean when, a generation later, her philosophies are able to penetrate and influence contemporary pop culture? Is it then fair to make the assumption that memory is a thing of the past, and by extension remains lost?

In 2011, Mthatha born spoken word artist/poet, Busiswa Gqulu, famously known as Kalawa Chikita, subsequently released two songs, "Siyaphambana" and "My name is" with DJ Zintle. These instantly became club hits. Their lyrics contain elements of "carefree-ness" and enjoying yourself, a trend that distinguishes Busiswa's music, and Brenda respectively. Fundamentally their music challenges the idea of conforming as per the expectations placed on being a womxn, as seen in Busiswa's "Ngoku" and "Lahla", and Brenda's "Kuyoze Kuyovalwa" and "No! No! Señor".

Can we recognize the intergenerational philosophies of MaBrrr and how through Kalawa Chikita, feminist ideologies reverberate in the present discourse?

## *Feminisms is ...*

Chairperson: Grace A. Musila

*Fractures within fractures: In what way is mainstream/ western feminism as theoretical & normative framework limited? How have African-American and African feminists sought to overcome these limitations?*

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The following paper aims to grapple with how African-American and African feminists have sought to overcome the limitations of mainstream/western feminism as a theoretical & normative framework. A critique of feminist history as the point of departure questions the central tenants of the movement which has deep historical exclusionary origins. Moreover, whilst these have been challenged valiantly by scholars who sought to break away from this norm there is a lack of acknowledgement of black bodies still being excluded in the movement today. Not only does the exclusion leave the movement vulnerable it renders contributions by people colour to the feminist movement as invisible. The paper contends that through an assessment of African-American and African feminism will reveal that there exist epistemological cleavages perpetuated by feminist leaders that dangerously mirror the same exclusionary practices that fail to acknowledge alternative intersectional thinking of feminism. Using celebrity feminism of Beyoncé Knowles, Danai Guirra and Zodwa Libram the paper seeks to suggest that if the movement is to survive and retain its intersectional mantra, alternative ‘fractures with in fractures’ of the movement that allow it branch out must celebrated, engaged with and not muted due to their difference.

“My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit” (Dzodan, 2011)

*African Feminisms: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects*

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Being angry but not resigning is the key to success for (African) feminists in so-called marginalised contexts. The restrictions and oppressions we face as African womxn are responded to naturally through our affectivities, bodies, languages, sexualities, different levels of ability and identities. Your being, in and of itself, is a weapon beyond measure as it knows you and what you require in the movement to reimagine and reimagine feminist futures. These spontaneous expressions are exactly the fibres of your being but have been policed and silenced because of the revolutionary power they hold. This calls for protecting the diverse ways in which parts of yourself intersect as the extent of your impact and survival lies at the moment of their convergence. The status quo, in its elitist disempowering systems of power, needs to be resisted by womxn and feminists in all their social strata for it to have a transformative impact in our futures. Dominant discourses are problematic as they do not allow for marginalised forms of communication and this is the niche that African feminists and womxn can occupy to reconfigure their sociocultural worlds. This is the point of entry for agency and creativity, as alternative routes to development as well as redefining the role of systematic dehumanisation need to be birthed from how and who we are. Let us uninstall dominant global and local discourses in favour for reimagining and reinstalling the means of operating in the world that resonate with our spontaneous expressions. We were always enough to exist in this world and to change it. To that I say: we are okay, let us reinforce our modes of resistance.

## Session Two

### *Shhh: Voicing and vocality*

Chairperson: Nkule Mabaso

*Agentic silence: Rediscovering Margaret in Bessie Head's Maru*

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This paper seeks to revisit Head's representation of female characters in the patriarchal setting of Botswana as depicted in *Maru* (1972). The main focus will be on the female character Margaret, an orphan of Khoisan<sup>1</sup> descent. I aim to challenge the limited perspective that scholars such as Katrak (1995) and Lederer (2009) present, when questioning Margaret's lack of agency, which they seem to expect because of her English education. Instances where Margaret affirms the perception of complete victimhood will be examined, alongside those where she subverts this perception by exercising agency. A few scholars have acknowledged Margaret's agency by perceiving her as subversively powerful through her art (Wilhelm 1983; Coundouriotis 1996; Guldemann 2003). I shall extend their debates by including an analysis of Margaret's dreams and trances, arguing how these also further her agency, even when she does not speak, nor take drastic measures to challenge gendered and racial oppression. In this paper I advance that through a consideration of passive resistance one can rethink female agency in Bessie Head's *Maru*.

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<sup>1</sup> While Khoisan is the politically correct term to use for her tribe, the terms Mosarwa and Basarwa will be used in this paper, to retain the original context of the novel.

*Glowfly Dance as Unmuted Voice*

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‘A scream doesn’t have to be loud. The strongest screams are the ones we hear within us, the ones that twist our organs up and run like a fist through our intestines and ribcages, the ones that have no voice’ – *Glowfly Dance*, p 322 (Jade Gibson, Penguin Random House Umuzi)

I speak to the mute child. Of the silence of the death of a mother that was loved, and the child left to speak. Of the global connectedness of women’s experiences in refuges. The vulnerabilities that society creates. It hurts in the children that grow to become adults, that were the silent witnesses. It hurts in the silent witnessing of the brutalities that impact upon women. When nothing happens. When fingers point at victims instead of perpetrators, who walk free. When society should be pointing at itself.

I will be speaking about my published novel, *Glowfly Dance* (Penguin Random House Umuzi), a true story that explores the meaning of resilience in the face of a man’s oppression, the realities that lead to intimate partner femicide, and the relevance of the book today in talks and readings. A girl child’s voice, now an adult, and the journey into telling, connecting and changing society that I am still working towards. The process, that is ongoing, that needs support and collaboration. Society is still hurting, because told stories need to reach the public. Women are killed by intimate male partners because we fail to talk, and fail to see. *Glowfly Dance* is a journey of seeing. I will talk of my work – with the vision of getting others to see. These are the links to *Glowfly Dance*, its vision, and a girl child’s story.

*Silence and its dis/contents: (Inter)generational talk and mothering after Apartheid*

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In exploring the stories (grand)mothers tell their (grand)children about their experiences under Apartheid this paper explores generational talk and the ‘silent’ legacies of violence and trauma that persist after Apartheid. Narrative analysis offers insight into the workings of intergenerational trauma and memory in multigenerational homes in a township in KZN. The families who participated in this study all experienced a particular traumatic event, personally experiencing the political violence of Apartheid. However, the study focused on how this event has been integrated into and represented in family histories, how what is ‘said’ and what remains ‘unsaid’ within families functions and constitutes their identities in their ongoing lived experiences. Women’s narratives, often considered secondary to the grand narratives of struggle and conflict, are drawn out to show the ways, as primary caregivers, they form the pivot for the (intergenerational) transmission of secondary traumatising. In the stories (Grand)mothers tell about themselves and their lives under Apartheid active silences are maintained about experiences of political trauma in the interests of ‘protecting’ those who came after from violent histories. By unpacking what is ‘said’ and ‘unsaid’ between generations it is evident that silences about political violence give way to reconstructions and articulations of trauma, sexuality and mothering in the stories these women tell the next generation. In doing so ‘silence’ speaks, offering lessons from a longer past and navigating new versions of family history that make it possible for both them and their children to create meaningful lives in a post-Apartheid South Africa.



*Speaking through the silences in Rachel Weeping: The reconfiguration of the everyday*

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Brett Michael Innes' novel, *Rachel Weeping*, details the uneasy relationship between a domestic worker, Rachel, and her employers after the death of her child under her employer's care. Innes describes the book as a narrative about class in post-apartheid South Africa, and the shared understanding of loss. In addition to dwelling on social imbalance, the domestic setting forces the characters to confront their vulnerabilities that are characterised by shifting power bases, and compounded by guilt and grief.

The guilt and grief which challenge the power dynamics of the relationship between Rachel and her employers Michelle and Chris Jordaan, leads to the development of a different kind of normalcy, where silences can be empowering. This paper examines strategies of representing the new language that develops as Rachel, a nurse employed as a domestic worker, embarks on a changed relationship with her employers. The paper looks at narrative strategies used to illustrate the vulnerabilities in how the everyday takes on new meaning when power shifts are imperceptible, yet change the meanings of everyday experiences in the Jordaan household and in Rachel's life. This paper is an examination of how the silenced, namely, the invisible classes of workers from neighbouring countries, speak, audibly and inaudibly in spaces that render them silent.

## *Violent Violences*

Chairperson: Tina Steiner

### *Creating Disability in Time: Epistemic Fallacies' Temporal Stakes*

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Most disability studies assumes that people with disabilities are an already constituted population and thus ignores how conditions of inequality produce disability. Concepts like Temporarily Able-Bodied and the recognition that aging increases the likelihood of disability make allowances for increase of disability within a population. However, these conceptualisations are mostly used to instantiate disability as universal ontological dilemmas with the intent of inciting ethico-political action premised on individual self-preservation. Decolonial theory frequently rests on a thanatopolitics (e.g. Mbembe's necropolitics) where the violences of colonialism and coloniality results in death, social or otherwise. Both these epistemologies implicitly depend on temporality. Within disability studies, universal futures and uncertain presents where disability is ever on the horizon and in decolonial theory, a temporal collapse closes the time of colonial oppression and death. When engaging with disability in the Global South from a decolonial feminist disability studies perspective, it is apparent that living in conditions of inequality for poor, black people increases the possibility of being temporarily able bodied and thus all populations do not carry the same kinds of risk or are guaranteed the same social supports when bodies and psyches become vulnerable. Further, masculinities play their way out in a temporality where social death is partial and alleviated through acts of violence or risk creating disability as a population. Thinking decoloniality with disability begs us to ask what happens in the time between death and life for poor, black people and thus reopens the temporal collapse assumed by thanatopolitics. Based on life histories with people with disabilities in Cape Town and South African memoirs on disability for my Phd, this paper will explore temporality through stories of becoming disabled. Disputing the temporalities at play within both disability studies and thanatopolitical decolonial

theory, I will argue that stories about becoming disabled reveal symptoms of already constituted racialized and gendered inequalities which entail an intersectional ethico-political response that undoes racialized political economies and patriarchal logics.

*Reading African Gender and Thinking about Rape*

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In the short story “Riva,” penned by the queer South African author, Richard Rive, Riva is an object of fascination and repulsion for the protagonist and narrator, Paul. Two versions of the story exist; the first published in the journal *Staffrider* in 1979, the second in Rive’s 1983 short story collection. In both versions, Riva makes a brief comment to Paul which precipitates his exit from her apartment and the story’s abrupt conclusion: “‘It’s quite safe, I won’t rape you.’” Paul then notes, “This was a coarse remark. I waited for her to laugh but she did not.”

Who can rape? Who can be raped?

This paper reflects on the ways that these questions can be articulated through a reading of an idiosyncratic grouping of texts. I move from an analysis of the “two Rivas” to other potentially foundational moments in the imagining of gender and sexual violence in Africa. One is the first French-language African text, authored by the colonial educator and writer, Amadou Mapaté Diagne. Commissioned for use in West African schools, *Les trois volontés de Malic* (1920), is a piece of short fiction and colonial propaganda that is almost totally devoid of both women characters and gender transgression. Another is the 1991 essay in which African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw introduces the concept of intersectionality as a way of conceptualizing the experience of multiple kinds of oppression and violence.

What understanding of sexual violence, and what concomitant ideas about African gender, do these texts help us to imagine, or prevent us from imagining?

*Struggles of the 'grass-roots people': In conversation with Amma Darko's Faceless*

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Until fairly recently, the contribution and acknowledgement of many female writers has been marginal in the literary world. In particular, many African women writers have engaged with issues of social justice, development, and the need to pay attention to the persistent inequalities that eat away the fabric of many societies. To this day, they continue to be at the coalface of the daily struggles that many African societies have to contend with. Our presentation zooms in on one of the African female writers, Amma Darko, whose work speaks to what she calls 'grass roots people'. While Darko has written a number of books, we focus on one of her novels, *Faceless*, which wrestles with the structural violence which bleeds into people's homes affecting their everyday experiences. We show how the poor and marginalised struggle to survive in a world that denies them legitimacy and how the coping strategies they employ impact negatively on the wider community. Consequently, we argue that the private cannot be divorced from the public; above and beyond disavowing the private-public bifurcation, we specifically interrogate the way in which Darko wrestles with the perpetual disconnect between the political master narratives and the counter-narratives from the people (women) in the 'grass-roots'.

### Session Three

#### *Invisible Economies: Migration and Labour*

Chairperson: Cullen Goldblatt

*Vulnerability and Complicity: The Figure of the Black Migrant Woman in Miriam Tlali's "Devil at a Dead End" and Chimamanda Adichie's "On Monday of Last Week"*

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Surveys of migration have revealed that half of the world's migrants are female (Martin 1992; Klein- Solomon 2006). In the African diaspora (which includes migration within and from the continent), this "feminization of migration" (Diop and D'Aloisio 2006) is also evident. Literary representations have, across time and specific locations, captured this trend and the particular vulnerability of the female migrant due to first, the precarity of, especially black and poor, migrants in general, and, second, the ubiquitous gender discriminations experienced by female migrants. In these two short stories, "Devil at a Dead End" (1978) and "On Monday of Last Week" (2009), the protagonists (migrants from Lesotho to South Africa, and from Nigeria to the USA respectively) are portrayed as vulnerable on various levels, but principally in terms of race, sexual violation and exploitation. Informed by African postcolonial feminist theories, a close comparative reading of both stories, which differ vastly in setting and style, is presented. This paper argues that these stories capture the complex vulnerability of the African female migrant, as well as the consequential complicity which constitutes part of the subjects' response to that vulnerability. This argument is elucidated through an analysis of the power dynamics between 'host' characters and migrants, and, further, the possibility of empowerment through transgression on the part of the female migrant figure is explored.

*“We Fit in the Society by Force”: Sex Work and Feminism in Africa*

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What does it mean to be an African sex worker feminist? In answering this question this essay draws from two qualitative studies that I conducted with African sex worker groups in 2014 and 2015 — the South African movement of sex workers called Sisonke and the African Sex Worker Alliance (ASWA). Although participants were initially reluctant to give a precise definition, many pointed to elements that could constitute such an identity. Based on their embodied lived experiences, each participant described what it meant for them to be an African, a sex worker and a feminist (respectively), and then collectively discussed these in relation to each other, and the social dimensions they occupy. I conclude that even though these three identities may seem incongruent, in certain embodiments, they actually inform each other. My aim with this work is for all feminists to recognize each other as comrades in the struggle for gender and sexual liberation, thus strengthening solidarity across social justice movements.

*Self-identification as resistant strategy against the stigmatisation of African diasporic women  
- an analysis of Chika Unigwe's On Black Sister Street*

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In taking James Young's argument on the distinction between representation as a collective and representation of the self, this paper examines self-identification as resistant strategy against the stigmatisation of African diasporic women. I critically analyse Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sister Street* and her narrative techniques to interlace, to overlap, as well as, to create connected yet independent stories about four female protagonists. The book articulates that diasporic women are susceptible to stereotypes and labelling, but as each individual defies against this and bring forth their unique experience. Mainly, I look at Unigwe's use of the analepsis technique or flashbacks, to tell the background story of each protagonist who unsettles the African sex worker stigma. Through this technique, she foregrounds that each chapter embodies a character's perspective and provides insight into their diverse subjectivities despite their shared diasporic route. I argue that Unigwe contributes towards a hybrid form of feminism that does not compromise independency for connectivity, or vice-versa. African diasporic Oshadi Magena, an African diasporic Feminist, advocates for a global sisterhood that unites all women irrespective if they live in or outside Africa against patriarchal oppression. In contrast to this theoretical branch of Feminism, Ruvimbo Goredema cautions against an encompassing label because such a bold inclusion fails to acknowledge the variant versions of feminism that operate on small scales spread across different spaces. My paper, overall, concludes that *On Black Sister Street* presents a meeting point that bridges both Feminist ideas and, most importantly, highlights the ability to exist part of and outside a social category.



*Oceanic Bellies and Liquid Feminism in Fatou Diome's Belly of the Atlantic (France/Senegal 2004)*

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In 2015, Fatou Diome, a Senegalese author, shocked French television audiences by declaring that “Europeans has better move over, because she is here [in France] to stay”. This paper reads, what some construe as an audacious re-imagining of European space from black immigrant woman through the dual lens of Afro-Europeanism (Gabdamosi, Thomas et al.) and critical black geography (McKittrick). Rejected by her French in-laws, Diome had found herself working as a domestic worker prior to her writing career. Her body of work, including the award-winning *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* [Belly of the Atlantic] (2004) focuses on the depiction of African women in the context of Afro-European migration. This paper draws together *Le ventre de l'Atlantique's* personification of the Atlantic as a devouring mother, the novel's fictionalised autobiographical of Diome as the protagonist and author's televised denunciation of the ideological hardening against the globalised mobility of black bodies. I argue that this layered schema of feminised representation denotes a liquid feminism that imagine the porous Afro-European border as a locus of black female mobility and visibility.

*A man who is not a man: Masculinities*

Chairperson: Fouad Asfour

*An exploration of Manhood, Sexuality and Culture in and Thando Mqolozana's A man who is not a man and John Trengove's Inxeba*

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When Thando Mqolozana published his debut novel *A Man who is not a Man* in 2009, it received heavy backlash. Critics felt that Mqolozana's text, which relays the story of the botched circumcision of a young Xhosa initiate, Lumkile, exposed and disrespected Xhosa culture by making public and controversial what is viewed as a private and sacred 'ethnic' custom and practice. Nine years later, in February 2018, the critically acclaimed film *Inxeba*, popularly known as *The Wound*, was banned from mainstream cinemas in South Africa, following several nationwide cinema shutdowns and a plethora of criticism via social media which objected to the film's intimate depiction of queer sexuality as an affront to the Xhosa ritual of male circumcision. In a close analysis of Mqolozana's *A man who is not a man* and the film *Inxeba*, this paper will explore the dynamics of male subjectivity within the context of South African cultural, that is Xhosa, ideologies of (hyper-)masculinity. Examining the public responses to both these creative modes, the paper will further explore the role of the popular imaginary in navigating and influencing national ideologies, narratives and discourses of identity. In line with critical readings of African creatives as not merely intellectuals "whose works mirror or can be used to mirror social thought, but as social thinkers themselves" (Adebanwi 405) whose work engages and questions heteronormative identity and subjectivity. I argue that Mqolozana and Trengove's respective artistic modes trans-formatively disrupt South African cultural and ideological norms.

*Exploitation of the White/Black Woman in Mariama Ba's Un Chant Ecarlate*

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The study investigates the techniques used by the authors to portray the White/Black woman in Mariama Ba's *Un Chant Ecarlate* (1981). Over the years, the power relations between men and women remains a subject of debate in selected works of francophone authors. In Mariama Ba's novel, the woman is seen as an object, a necessary evil, an inferior being which relegates and subjugates the woman in the traditional African society. This paper examines the challenges of the white/ black woman, the exploitative techniques of the man in marginalising the woman in a patriarchal society.

The study condemns traditional practices and norms which humiliates the woman in a socio-cultural context. The study pleads for a social change with respect to Molar Leslie-Ogundipe's theory of Stiwanism, an African type of Feminism. According to Ogundipe (1994) the theory describes the conditions of the African woman and the new agenda for women in Africa as well as the society.

The study highlights the role of African men and woman in deconstructing hegemonic masculinity traits and re-affirming the status of the woman in the society. The study encourages a collaborative effort amongst male and female stiwanists in enhancing peace and harmony in our society beginning from the home, the cradle for social change.

*The Inherited Toxic Masculinities and Forced Creation of Toxic Bodies in the Conservative Nigerian Landscape*

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This research will explore the function of toxic masculinities in Nigeria and how agency is achieved through rebelling against it. Chris Abani's *Graceland* will be used as one of the primary sources in this investigation as the protagonist, Elvis, is torn between what his father thinks a man *should* be and what Elvis thinks a man *can* be. As an Elvis Presley impersonator in Lagos, Nigeria, one of Elvis's sources of solace is his identifiability with local transvestites, as in a sense Elvis too is a cross dresser, a black male body dressing in which is not orthodox in Nigeria. Furthermore, this research will look at the highly conservative role that family values play in Nigeria as a persistent influence which forces divergence between Nigerians bodies being true to their identity and highly held Nigerian morals. Alternative sexualities in Nigeria are highly unspoken of and are infrequently written about however, they do exist. The boundary between the unconventional and conventional and oppression and liberation is challenged and the line between masculine and feminine bodies is a binary of visible and blurred which should be probed to bring more understanding to this taboo.

*INXEBA – Interrogating Conceptions of Manhood, Sexuality and Cultural Identity*

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Inxeba: The Wound revived debates on ulwaluko and its attendant social discourses in South Africa. What was elided by the debates which saw the film censored from public view by the Film and Publication Board of South Africa, are formulations of ‘Manhood’ which are rooted in culture, tradition and custom; formulations that frame homosexuality as abject. Through a discussion of Manhood and manhood proper which aims to demarcate the deontological status of manhood, we maintain that Inxeba revealed the nexus between Manhood, policed sexualities and cultural identity.

In detailing the deontological status of manhood proper, we critically unpack masculinity in the Xhosa tradition and challenge the ‘factual’ position of Manhood. ‘Manhood’ is understood to be stable and unchanging, allowing only one conception of Xhosa manhood which is depicted and contested by the narrative of the film.

Using feminist theory, to interrogate culture, custom and tradition and its imposed silences on feminised bodies in contemporary South African society and reveal how Inxeba subverts and contests conceptions of ‘Manhood’.

## Day Two

28 September

### Keynote Siphokazi Magadla

*From ukuzabalaza to ukutabalaza (from the struggle to hustling): Silence and super strength in the lives of women ex-combatants after apartheid*

Chairperson: Danai Mupotsa

Dr Siphokazi Magadla is a Senior Lecturer in the Political and International Studies department at Rhodes University, South Africa. She worked previously as a research consultant for the Security Sector Governance programme of the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, focusing on the role of women in peace and security. She did her Bachelor of Arts majoring in Political and International Studies and Journalism and Media Studies, and Honours in Political and International Studies at Rhodes University. She holds a Masters Degree in International Affairs from Ohio University, USA. She is a Fulbright Scholar. Her PhD examined the state assisted integration of women ex-combatants into civilian life in post-apartheid South Africa. She is currently working on a book based on her PhD study that will be published by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press. She teaches and researches on post-colonial/civil wars and militarism in Africa, demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration processes in Africa, security sector reform, gender, peace and security, South African foreign policy and African feminisms, gender and citizenship in South Africa. She was a fellow of the Social Science Research Council's Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Fellowship Program in 2013-2014, which provided the funding for her doctoral research. She was previously a co-chairperson of the Rhodes University Women's Academic Solidarity Association and the Coordinator the Politics department's Thinking Africa project. She is the current Board member and Book Review Editor of the Journal of Contemporary African Studies (JCAS). Since July 2017, she serves as a workshop facilitator of the Social Science Research Council's Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Fellowship Program. The SSRC's Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa programme supports African scholars working and undertaking doctoral studies in universities in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and South Africa. She is a recipient of the Andrew Mellon Inclusive

Professoriate grant (2018 – 2020) which supports her research and funds some of her Masters and PhD students. In June 2018, she was appointed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to serve in the high level review panel into the work of the State Security Agency. The review panel is tasked with assessing the mandate, capacity and organisational integrity of the State Security Agency.

## Session Four

### *Vulnerabilities*

Chairperson: Sharlene Khan

#### *Comic calibrations of violence in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa*

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“Laughter is serious. More complicated, more serious than tears” (Morrison, 113)

“Humour is paradoxically bound up with social suffering in Africa” (Obadare, 5)

In this paper, I reflect on three case studies which interlace death and laughter, through the use of popular music and dance to make commentary on three tragic moments in contemporary histories in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. I am interested in the ambivalence of laughter as a response to these moments of vulnerability, brutality and death. I am also interested in the complicated appeal of these musical tracks and dance moves as aesthetically pleasing, and in some instances, erotic; yet at the same time, signalling surrender to the life-denying power of the state. These comic texts respond to the respective public transcripts staged by Nigeria’s First Lady, the Kenyan police and South Africa’s ruling party in three ways: by remixing these public transcripts of political lip-service to unmask power’s pretensions; by deploying familiarity – both in the sense of intimate knowledge and in the sense of dethroning power from its haughty pretensions—; and through intertextual citations from a shared public memory.



*Un/reading the trafficked body: Vulnerability in Sanusi's Eyo*

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This paper uses a feminist epistemological reading of the bodies of female characters in Abidemi Sanusi's *Eyo* and how these can be read as vulnerable. Reading these trafficked/travelling bodies as liminal, present/absent, and fragile, I engage with the idea of vulnerability as a site for contemplating unspoken, affective meanings of trauma on women's bodies. Vulnerability is seen as a constant state of unbeing, in which female subjects face constant threat of being erased, harmed and forgotten. However, I hope to also tease out ways of thinking about vulnerability in affirming ways, as sites for thinking about possibilities and promise. Sanusi's *Eyo* tells the narrative of a ten year old child who is trafficked to Europe as a way of aiding her poverty stricken family. *Eyo's* trauma emphasises the persistent vulnerability that she faces, as she remains trapped in her body, unable to become whole. While the character's visible and invisible traumas are emphasized, reading her body as vulnerable creates possibilities of un/reading victimhood and defeat.

*Textual Vulnerability in Candice Derman's Indescribable*

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Candice Derman's memoir, *Indescribable*: It's easy to keep a bad secret generates such discord, it unsettles because of the narrative choices used to tell her story of sexual violation. It is persistent in pointing the finger of accusation at Derman, because she conveys the turbulence that ensues not in her family, but in just her life, such that she and the reader are arrested in this space which she translates legibly, but which she struggles to understand. In her translation of this space for the reader, she uses the experiencing child's voices, and matures from an immature eight year old, to an angry sixteen year old, and in the epilogue, an almost thirty-six woman and wife who resists labels of victim and survivor. The narrative voice carries the story, implicates the reader, and forces a reconsideration of culpability, and demands action and care. This paper explores various the ways in which vulnerability as a concept gives the book multiple meanings, particularly in the assessment of risks that accompany vulnerability, the exposure that ensues, and the care that needs to be practised.

*Vulnerable subjectivities in Kagiso Lesego Molohe's Dancing in the dust and Nadifa Mohamed's The Orchard of Lost Souls*

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Kagiso Lesego Molohe's *Dancing in the dust* and Nadifa Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls* are feminist revisionist accounts that explore the active participation of young women during the repressive regimes of South Africa and Somalia respectively. Through the representation of two female characters, Molohe and Mohamed's narrative offer fictional reconstruction of young girl's stories of conflict, which consciously insert and privilege the horrifying experiences that women are subjected to during times of conflict and war. These vulnerable storylines portray some of the horrendous stories of abuse, fear and humiliation that women detainees had to withstand during detention, where they were subjected to interrogation and physical, mental and emotional torture. These novels illustrate how the two female characters, growing dissatisfaction with the repressive regime see them joining underground student organisations, however, their participation in a political mass demonstration subsequently leads to their arrest and detention. Through the fictionalised representation of incarceration and torture, Molohe and Mohamed depict the traumatic experiences that the protagonists have to undergo while in detention and the resilience they exhibit in the aftermath. This paper focuses on the depiction of the various vulnerabilities that young girls are exposed to during times of repression. I argue that the vulnerable subjectivities portrayed in these two novels, offer us alternative ways of understanding how young female victims and survivors of torture struggle to re-imagine other selves that transcend the oppressive regimes that seek to destroy them.

*Feeling and Ugly*

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leaving:

parts of myself  
in my scratches  
my notes  
wishes and writing

parts of myself  
at the doorsteps  
of lovers,  
equal parts  
love and risk  
equal parts fear,  
imprints  
on the face and hands of my daughter,  
she is the teacher of compassion

letting myself die  
so that other parts of my soul might come to live.

## ***Movements and Rights***

Chairperson: Polo Moji

### *A Historical Overview of the Trends in Feminist Movements in Nigeria*

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Feminism has been a movement for the rights of women against gender discrimination and gender based violence. It emphasises on the need for equal women participation in public private and public sectors of national life. Hence the slogan that; "Feminism is a radical view that a woman is a person.". In Nigeria several factors like; cultural beliefs, male chauvinism, misapplication of religious thoughts, etc. have contributed to discrimination against women rights in public functions over the ages in Nigeria which is one of most populous country in Africa with diversities along ethnic, religious and economic orientations. However, biological differences between men and women exist naturally, but do not apply that men and women should have different rights and freedoms. This paper seeks to trace the history and challenges of Women movements in Nigeria in Nigeria and thereafter provides some alternative solutions towards improving women right to freedom and liberty. The methodology of the paper borders on intensified individual and group discussions at field work and use of relevant literature.

*Your Equality will not protect you: The uses of Silence in Post-Apartheid South Africa*

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This article attempts to theorise South Africa's constitutional articulations of equality through Audre Lorde's work. Focusing on Lorde's meditations/theorisations on silence, the author attempts to Queer Rainbow nationalist conceptions of equality by rendering visible Apartheid "hauntings" in democratic South Africa.

Through a probative treatment of the constitutional promise of equality, the author uses Lorde's poetry and essays to expose the Silences which continue to create networks of marginalisation and vulnerability in Post-Apartheid South Africa. They further explore the potential interrogative uses of Silence in South African constitutional equality discourse.

Through theoretical experimentation, the author attempts to ask what happens when theories inspire the transformation of silence into language and action in a different time and place? Through a meditation on Post-Apartheid Constitutionalism, I offer some preliminary thoughts on how the centring of Silence can produce transformative conceptions of democratic equality.

*Ethno-cultural Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity in Select Narratives for Children in Nigeria*

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Children's literature in Nigeria exemplifies ethno-cultural practices that are rooted in the social milieu of the Nigerian people. On the one hand, the ethno-cultural practices function as a viable medium that educates, entertains and foregrounds indigenous norms. On the other hand, they are archetypes, expressing manly values and behaviours, which are deeply rooted in the collective Unconscious of the Nigerian people, especially the eastern part of Nigeria, in this case. Although children's literature is a consistent focus of research, the study of cultural practices and the construction of hegemonic masculinity in children's literature in Nigeria is less common, despite a developing academic interest in the effects of African culture on gender relations in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, seeks to analyse, through the application of Carl Jung's theory of the Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, the ethno-cultural construction of hegemonic masculinity in three selected texts, namely: Ekpa, Anthonia's *Edidem Eyamba and the Edikang-Ikong Soup*, Ifeanyi Ifoegbuna's *Folake and Her Four Brothers* and Ikechukwu, Ebonogwu's *The Champion of Echidime*. This study reveals how ideals of hegemonic masculinity are constructed and communicated through various ethno-cultural norms to the readers, especially boys. The paper also shows how the ethno-cultural practices is replete with masculine ideologies and messages that promote male dominance, female subjugation, and gender inequality, with a tendency to impose rigid traits of masculinity on young male readers, as well as negatively influence their gender relations in the society.

## Storytelling and Agency

Chairperson: Akili Ngulube

*'Knowing' the Rapist in Kagiso Molope's This Book Betrays my Brother*

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The conception of rapists as violent unknown and unknowable animals from hell is constantly deployed within popular discourses of rape. Although this image of rapists has been trenchantly critiqued by scholars as an incomplete portrayal of the rapist and the contexts of rape (Gqola, *Rape: A South African Nightmare* 2015), the image still floats around in narratives of rape and in rape education. Thus, to contribute towards a deconstruction of this myth, I read Kagiso Molope's *This Book Betrays my Brother* to trace how the text humanizes the rapist. In my reading, I rely on insights from Pumla Gqola's identification of rape myths and their connectedness to systemic oppression.

I argue that: on the one hand, the text humanizes the rapist by taking us through intimate details and moments of his life. He is depicted as a desirable member of the society to deconstruct the framing of rapists as undesirable outsiders. On the other, it functions as a space for enunciation in a way that challenges the "unspeakability" (Motsemme 2004; Gqola 2007) of rape. Essentially, the text stages a profound kind of anti-rape advocacy by weaving a narrative web which renders society complicit in the currency of rape. I conclude that framing of the identity of rapists as violent strangers powers a narrative through which societies deny the currency of rape. Also, such reading of the rapist helps societies maintain moral pristineness against the backdrop of a violent crime. But in Molope's narrative, the family and society are depicted as partners in the perpetration of rape, and in the reluctance of rape victims to report the crime. Thus, the novel makes a profound statement on the role of arts in advocacy against gender-based violence.



*Scheherazade's Achievement(s): Storytelling and agency in Fatema Mernissi's memoir  
Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood and Scheherazade Goes West*

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The Moroccan feminist sociologist Fatema Mernissi (1940-2015) is best known for her pioneering work on gender equality in Islam. In this paper however, I wish to focus on her memoir, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, published in 1994 and her reflections on its Eurocentric reception, which culminated in the publication of *Scheherazade Goes West. Different Cultures, Different Harems* in 2001. Both texts deal with the way in which women's agency is circumscribed by particular horizons of constraint determined by their social contexts and thus the texts contrast local, particular forms of constraint with more diffuse forms of oppression that characterise western modernity. This paper will offer a reading of her harem childhood to trace some of the alternative modes of enacting small freedoms that the memoir documents. As becomes apparent in Mernissi's reflections on the memoir's reception, these achievements seem to be largely illegible within a western feminist paradigm in particular and a meritocratic rationality of development in general. In contrast, Mernissi asserts that such modes of communal sociality – storytelling, performance, artistic production, and self-care and a kind of learned psychological acumen – mark direct, albeit subtle, forms of resistance to the constraining circumstances even if they are not necessarily recognised as such. The paper examines how the figure of Scheherazade emerges in the two texts as an example of the kind of psychological acumen that allows women insight into their social context in order to carve out pockets of resistance within a framework where “words, silence, dreams, gestures, tears all exist interdependently and within the same interpretive field” (Motsemme 2004).

*Dismantling Detective Gender Roles: The potential of South African Feminist Crime Fiction in Angela Makholwa's Red Ink and H.J. Golakai's The Lazarus Effect.*

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Crime and detective fiction has recently become a prominent genre in post-Apartheid South African literature. However, despite the category's growing popularity, this field has very few black female detective figures. Many of the black female characters in these texts are often relegated to the position of the sidekick. The female sleuths that do exist have largely been characterized by hardboiled, masculine traits. This does not necessarily mean that these detectives are patriarchal or misogynistic but it is interesting to note that this typecasting exists. This paper analyses Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink* and H.J. Golakai's *The Lazarus Effect* as a South African feminist crime fiction text. In Golakai's debut novel *The Lazarus Effect*, Voinjama Johnson (Vee) is the spirited detective and investigative journalist who researches the disappearance of missing teenager, Jaqueline Paulsen. Chloe Bishop, a white lesbian is her assistant at Urban magazine and performs the duty of the 'sidekick'. In *Red Ink*, Lucy Khambule is commissioned to tell the story of Napoleon Dingiswayo, a convicted serial killer and known to the media as 'The Butcher'. As Lucy becomes more embroiled in his violent biography, her own life is endangered. Both Vee and Lucy are endowed with journalistic skills, they are ambitious and very tough. However, they are also extremely attractive and in several ways they embody the hardboiled male detective. The overt themes of motherhood and their romantic relationships challenge this notion. In *Red Ink* and *The Lazarus Effect* we are provided with two highly independent characters that can defend themselves. Their stereotypical male characteristics are wielded as a weapon against violence against women and children as well as patriarchy rather than as a tool to further perpetuate these systems. This paper thus addresses the sub-category of South African feminist crime fiction in its comparison and contrast of Lucy and Vee.

*Black Feminist and Mestiza practice of Self-disclosure: Writing about art as dialogic creative process*

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This paper draws from Black Feminist and Mestiza writing (Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Aída Hurtado) which show that practices of conscientising and self-disclosure have not only brought about a changed awareness about socio-political realities, but also inspired movements in art and culture, such as global conceptualism. Writing about art, then, seen as “decolonial option” (Rolando Vázquez and Walter Mignolo) could be understood as both practices to communicate and negotiate social justice practices, as well as making visible and unpacking resistant strategies in the everyday. The talk is based on the practice of self-disclosure as discussed in Hurtado’s 2011 paper 'Making Face, Rompiendo Barreras: The Activist Legacy of Gloria E. Anzaldúa' which addresses Anzaldúa’s legacy (published in 'Bridging: How Gloria Anzaldúa's Life and Work Transformed Our Own'). Hurtado elaborates lessons she learned from her engagement with Anzaldúa, the first one being “Disclosure of Self” – stating that she “believed deeply that one could not have access to knowledge, much less produce it, without disclosing oneself in one's work.” I will reflect on the political use of narratives of self, and how it influenced my own practice of creative writing, and want to discuss if and how these processes could lead to processes of sharing and learning.

## Session Five

### *The Mute Will Speak: Unapologetic Dissent*

Chairperson: Siphokazi Magadla

*“We Know Why,” Though We May Not Speak It*

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In “The Mute Always Speak: On Women’s Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” Nthabiseng Motsemme demonstrated that “when we reject dominant western oppositional hierarchies of silence and speech, and instead adopt frameworks where words, silence, dreams, gestures, tears all exist interdependently and within the same interpretive field, we find that the mute always speak.” Professor Motsemme observed that women’s recollections are often about the contexts of daily life: “home, domesticity, relationships, and quotidian lives are employed to map their experiences of human rights violations.” My desire is to bring Professor Motsemme’s observations to bear on the experiences of black girls in the U.S. context, who are systematically pushed out of school, a reality that has received a great deal of attention through the work of Monique W. Morris, author of *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. Morris wrote:

One of the most persistent and salient traits among girls who have been labeled “delinquent” is that they have failed to establish a meaningful and sustainable connection with schools. This missing link is exacerbated by the increased reliance of public schools on exclusionary discipline, at present one of the most widely used measures to deal with problematic student behaviors. Indeed, nearly 48 percent of Black girls who are expelled nationwide do not have access to education services. Black girls are 16 percent of the female student population, but

nearly one-third of all girls referred to law enforcement and more than one-third of all female school-based arrests.

The criminalization of Black girls is much more than a street phenomenon. It has extended into our schools, disrupting one of the most important protective factors in a girl's life: her education. Loc. 79 if 4929).

In 2016, I worked with black girls in an alternative school, where children are sent when they have been suspended from their regular schools. I wanted to provide a space in which black girls could tell their stories. To this purpose, I introduced frameworks for understanding school pushout. However, the girls gave voice to whatever stories they chose to narrate. In this context, a 14-year-old girl, T, first recounted having been handcuffed by a white cop and thrown in the back of a squad car, with handcuffs that were extremely tight. "Every time I've been in a cop car they ain't never had them that tight on us." She was taken to jail, where she was kept for 5 days. After completing her story, which is surely one of state violence in violation of T's human rights and her rights as a child, T informed us that the story she had recounted was not what *we* needed to talk about. As if having concurred in conversation with Professor Motsemme, T wanted us to focus our attention on the place where she lived most of her life—school. What was the problem at school? School uniforms and dress code, a contested territory when it comes to black girls and their bodies within the confines of school, in the U.S. context.

During my presentation, I would like to tell not only T's story, but *our* story—what occurred in the aftermath of T's story. Part of the fallout of T's story—which set the girls and myself into discussion with the administration—was my termination.

Professor Motsemme wrote about the themes of silence as resistance and courage; silence as illusion of stability; and silence as a site for coping and the reconstitution of self. I would like to engage a conversation about the silence of agreement that inhabited the room when I told the girls I wouldn't be returning. One of them said—a white administrator surveilling us all the while: "I know why." The girl spoke those words. Our silence ensued. Perhaps it was also the silence of resistance and courage. The white woman, listening on, had already been unsteadied by my last words to the girls. It's a wonder if she actually withstood the silence of our collective "We know why," our silent story.

*When Silence Is Not Politically Quiet: The Captive Maternal and Surrogate Activists*

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Nthabiseng Motsemme's "The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" analyzes examples of "women's work" that reproduce stable families in times of war and siege. Such work, the author notes:

can be located in some testimonies where silence may have been used by mothers to create illusions of stability, of constancy and of matter-of-factness particularly for their children to maintain some kind of moral order in their homes. Many of us who grew up during the years of the State of Emergency in the 1980s in urban ghettos are familiar with this form of shielding silence by mothers to carve an imaginary calmness amid constant violence. For example, gun shots and running footsteps just outside one's yard would awaken households in the quiet of the night. However, when families woke up in the morning, it was life as usual – porridge to be prepared for breakfast; uniforms to be ironed; baths to be timed; and other last-minute preparations for school and work. There might be a vague, or more commonly not a single utterance about what everyone had witnessed and heard during the night. It is, then, true that silence can be as misleading as words. This silence which women's narratives echo is one which attempts to compensate for the loss of innocence for children who lived in a violent everyday in which women had, and continue to have, little power to change.

This paper discusses "women's work" as the labor of the "Captive Maternal." It examines nonverbal protest through the actions of the Captive Maternal (CM) or her children as surrogate activists both inside the home and in public, with a study-tribute to Erica Garner (1990-2017). The CM is understood to be a female or feminized caretaker for kin, community, and self (often in that order) within racist-sexist, predatory environments (See James, "The Womb of Western Theory," *Carceral Notebooks*\*). Using the historical context of the black/African female presence in the Americas, traceable through 17<sup>th</sup> century Elizabeth Keyes (who litigated to not

be enslaved after an indenture) and 18<sup>th</sup> century Sally Hemings (enslaved “concubine” of Thomas Jefferson whose labor for plantation and children economically and politically [through the 3/5<sup>th</sup> clause] enriched the 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the US), this paper tracks the exploitation of the generative powers of the CM to stabilize racist democracies through reproduction of student, worker, family and citizens with fractional powers under democracy.

The paper explores the contributions of Erica Garner (1990-2017), her silent protests in “die ins” at the site where her father Eric Garner was killed on Staten Island, NY, by NYPD chokehold and chest compression; the caretaking role that her 7-year old daughter performed as a surrogate mother for her own mother’s loss, and the absence of other maternal caretakers for the exhausted adult activist. The shift of maternal silence to care for families who have lost loved ones to police violence, creates the child CM. The child Captive Maternal can either be silenced herself by the elder maternal or routinized silence as a coping mechanism in the process of normalizing grief and trauma.

Silence is not quiet with chairs scrapping across the floor, pots slamming in the kitchen before a meal, shoes kicked out of one’s way, as stress is protested. When the “silence” is itself protested as familial, communal, and intra-maternal stress are shared, the lack of quiet becomes a political act. Such acts bridge the private and public spheres of non-verbal protest. From the sucking of teeth or grunts in the face of authority to lying down on the concrete where one’s father was murdered and sighing, nonverbal speech in the absence of “quiet” (as the absence of sound), is performed by intergenerational Captive Maternals as they contest power in communication inside and outside the home.

*The Criminalization of Black “Maternal” Dissent*

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If muteness remains within the purview of revolution—in terms of desire, action, and dreams—can one argue that Black violence can only enter the realms of the symbolic and imaginary through the filtered lens of the truth of white desire: a repression of a truth which is also undoubtedly a lie? The production a hermeneutics of violence situated within semiotic economy of Black women’s absence and erasure remains critical to understanding the extent to which Black women’s muteness effects the sphere of revolutionary politics. What remains unsymbolizable in language, or the ‘real’ in psychoanalytic terms, elicits speculative theories of violence that disclose Black women’s political desire, misread as demand, as the only way forward politically: for the destruction of the political in the current episteme.

Positing that the Black psyche’s constitution in historical violence leaves a material trace we can map through twentieth and twenty-first century revolutionary movements, this paper argues that one of the material effects of an implicit acceptance the discursive and unconscious link between antiblack violence and conceptions of the political are carved onto Black women’s bodies. Discussing Winnie Madikizela-Mandela’s forced speech, and silences, at the TRC hearings, this presentation argues that as a revolutionary figure Madikizela-Mandela’s testimony and abjection demonstrated how the rhetoric of Black maternal pathology aided in the criminalization of Black dissent. The TRC hearings continued the status quo of making violence against Black people both palatable and justifiable through placing the onus of the violence of the state onto the condition of Blackness itself in and through Madikizela-Mandela. However, Madikizela-Mandela’s political contributions demonstrate that although all Black politics in so far as they are liberatory are a performance necessitated by violence, they are also revolutionary calls for a form of Black love tethered to the violence of its conceit, calling upon us all to revisit the legitimate use of violence in future battles against antiblackness.



## *Gendered Spaces & Places*

Chairperson: Nwabisa Bangeni

*Allowing the Mute to Speak: Interrogating the Portrayal of Women Through a Feminist Lens in Tjieng Tjang Tjerries by Jolyn Phillips*

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*Tjieng Tjang Tjerries*, a collection of short stories by Jolyn Phillips, centre on the colourful characters that live in the coloured, fishing community of Gansbaai, a small coastal town between Hermanus and Agulhas in South Africa. This community, as a microcosm of South African society, is conventionally patriarchal. In contemporary South Africa, women are faced with a wide range of issues, such as domestic violence, gender discrimination and poverty. These elements are explored in the stories to give readers a sense of togetherness, in that their struggles are shared. The women's role is primarily domestic, including raising the children and seeing to the well-being of the family, while the men are generally shown to be irresponsible. Phillips documents their daily trials and tribulations and, in doing so, she gives a voice to the voiceless and marginalized women in the community and therefore allows the mute to speak. Previously women's struggle for freedom from oppression, for community rights and for gender equality was largely ignored, however through focusing on the women in the stories these women are able to gain a voice and a place in society. Through the female protagonists, themes of love, compassion and family, as well as responsibility and fidelity are brought to the forefront of the text, and thus the issues women face are addressed. In general the essay aims to focus on the portrayal of women in the short stories and how some still remain bound by the restrictions present in patriarchal society, while some enjoy the freedoms which post-feminism ascribes to women. Both aspects give female readers a sense of unity and a shared struggle.

*The Lingeer's Jihad: Re-examining Historical Women's Agency in the Senegambia Region*

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The oral history of the Kingdom of Kajoor is conspicuously silent concerning women. In certain specific instances women are mentioned. These women are usually the *awo*, the sitting male ruler's favorite wife, or the *lingeer*, the female ruler who is always the oldest able woman in the male ruler's matrilineage. Being that these kingdoms evolved from kinship groups, it stands to reason that women would have prominent roles in the maintenance and care of the state. However, their voices are sometimes muted in the crafted narratives in African History.

The silent women speak to us across the centuries through the children they bore, nurtured, and raised as well as the crops they planted and harvested, etc. My paper focuses on one of the times the written oral record mentions a woman, the lingeer Yacine Bubu. Contrary to the kingdom's constitution, the sitting male ruler deposed Yacine Bubu in favor of his mother as lingeer. Yacine Bubu allied with the Muslim leader Njie Sal, an aspirant jihadist. Combining their forces, they defeated and killed the sitting male ruler. Much to Njie Sal's chagrin, Yacine Bubu insists that another of her nephews be named ruler. Njie Sal's disciples later assassinate the young ruler. Yacine Bubu then invites yet another nephew and neighboring ruler to come rule Kajoor. He came, killed Njie Sal, and restored order. Yacine Bubu's decisive actions speak through the centuries even bursting through the male-centric oral tradition reminding us again that the women were more than just there procreating and planting crops. Yacine Bubu's actions require a reconceptualization women's agency in 17th Century Senegambia leading to an overall challenge to the narratives of African History that we pass to students.

This episode in African history is situated between two harsh realities: colonization introduced a dismissal of women in African governments; and women's agency in contemporary African societies is being constantly subsumed into a new narrative that privileges colonization/conquest/decolonization while ignoring the preceding centuries. Sadly, even while investigating the millennia of African History before colonization, the voices of women (and all Africans) are often distorted as they are merged into an amorphous mass of subjects to be studied. My work challenges all these trends.

*“I did, you just didn’t listen properly”: Storytelling as Communal Desire in Jolyn Phillips’  
Tjieng Tjang Tjerries*

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There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard. (Arundhati Roy)

Jolyn Phillips’s quasi-autobiographical debut collection, *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries and Other Stories* (2016), presents a composite portrait of the close-knit coloured fishing community of Gansbaai in the Western Cape. Relayed in English, intermingled with the distinctive local Afrikaans dialect of the characters themselves, the stories focus especially on the daily trials and tribulations of women who attempt to assert a sense of agency, despite the patriarchal precepts of church and a parochial community. Dominant themes that emerge include the fecklessness of men versus women’s resilience in the face of infidelity and poverty; petty jealousies and resentments fuelled by communal gossip; family secrets and revelations; sanctimonious Christian values at odds with deep-seated experiences of love, loss and guilt; and the effort to choose between resignation and resistance. Deceptively simple on the surface, the stories offer wryly humorous or ironic insights into the realities of heartache and disillusionment, and the redemptive possibilities of healing and self-affirmation. In this paper, I intend to read *Tjieng Tjang Tjerries* as a conventional short story cycle which, though it presents idiosyncratic ‘voices’ and narratives, ultimately features a community persona larger than the sum of its parts. However, my concern is also to place the collection within the tradition of postcolonial women’s cycles that embody a desire to “remember and retell, not the continuous, unified narrative of dominant history, but the discontinuous narratives of individual survivors ... not ethnographic artefacts but living narratives derived from family and community” (Wong 187). Thus, Phillips’ adoption of an oral-style storytelling mode, rather than being conservative in impulse, emphasises local political struggles and the specificities of the experiences of marginalised cultural groups – groups supposedly subsumed under the rubric of the larger imagined community of the nation. Her collection thus constitutes a refreshing departure from the tropes of either ‘Rainbowism’ or a disenchanted democracy in much contemporary South African fiction.

*The questions art asks: rape, the burden of knowing and feminist imagination*

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## Session Six

*Where does it hurt: The body in pain.*

Chairperson: Nomusa Makhubu

*Words alone cannot hold this pain*

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Where does it still hurt? This is an important question to ask if we are to imagine what the/a feminist future will look like. To ask where it still hurts is to insist on a feminist future which takes pain and memory seriously. In this paper, I attempt to answer this question, reflecting on my experiences as a university student thus far. In doing this, I speak to the core tenets of *The Mute Always Speak*: reflecting on what silence means, rejecting the idea that silence always denotes an absence, exploring other languages which circulate alongside the verbal.

My first argument is that the university is a violent space; particularly violent in how it forces us to express ourselves predominantly in verbal language. My second point of exploration is to consider how anti-rape protests such as #Chapter212 and #RURenewal (and the conversations they sparked) reveal a system of knowledge where verbal language is not prioritized. I consider how words can fail to be meaningful, and how they can hurt. I also consider body language: the ways it can be mis/interpreted and dismissed. Finally, I argue that the valorization of words in university spaces is a tool through which other worlds are suppressed, dismissed, but never destroyed. Where does it still hurt? Here.

*Where Does It Still Hurt?*

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Where does it still hurt?

At the thought of this question I am reminded of how growing up, I enjoyed trips to the doctor and would even feign sickness just to be taken to the Hospital.

I remember how I would always succumb to the temptation offered by being the object of attention. I was enthralled by the possibility of the doctor asking where it hurt and then proceeding to do his utmost to mitigate this hurt. I read the doctors preoccupation with pacifying my pain as affirmation of my value, my worth. This quest for affirmation outweighed the threat embodied by offering my body to the vagaries of medical discourse. But perhaps more accurately, it was my ignorance of the tenuous relationship between the black corporeal body and western medicine that allowed me to offer myself as unreservedly as I did. I cannot quite remember who it was who surmised so succinctly: “we live and we learn.”

Later on, being initiated into the world of tumultuous romantic relationships, of vacillating emotions and searing heartbreak, the question took on renewed significance. The violence of romantic intimacy subverted the notion of a hurt located expressly on the corporeal body. Who asks lovers: “where does it hurt”? What do lovers respond when faced with this question?

Given these two impossible scenarios, that articulate my most immediate interactions with pain, on the question “where does it still hurt”, I muse: “what tenuous ground to tread”.

I inadvertently think of Harold Sonny Ladoo, who through writing in the longstanding tradition of post-colonial studies- wherein the corporeal body is the homing star, the centre around which all discourse and ideology orbit - originates the assertion ‘No Pain Like This Body’.

I think about it

I ruminate over it

Obsess about it

Lose sleep over it

This single offering, which at the surface promises reprieve but upon close scrutiny complicates our ideas and therefore our relations to pain.

*Shame and Resistance: Black Female Bodies and the Intersectionality of Race, Gender and Violence in South African Women Fiction*

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Black female bodies have a long history as a site of violence and shame at the point where race and gender intersects. This has placed them in revolutionary positions where resistance becomes not just words but acts in which they perform against repressive forces and patriarchal structures of the African society. In that case, becoming mutes that speak through acts. Female South African writers portray in their fiction and non-fiction, these variegated forms of violence on the Black female body; the dissection, rape, subjectivities, subjugation, racial as well as gender-based violence; showing ways in which Black South African women grapple with these issues, building up defense responses for survival. They seek to show ways in which Black women negotiate their spaces and secure for themselves, safer spaces in a nation where racialized gender and sexual violence permeate. Much work has been covered in the area of Black women subjectivity and on the subject of shame as a phenomenon. However, I take the affective turn to show ways in which shame is structured and how Black women in South Africa build up defenses against the mechanics of shame as a form of resistance to these oppressive and repressive structures. I examined Donald Nathanson's concept of "The Compass of Shame" which proposes four alternate ways in which individuals build defenses against shame as forms of speaking (through silence and acts), resisting and rejecting racial and patriarchal constructs of the Black woman. To further expand on this concept, I undertook a reading of Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Barbara Boswell's *Grace*; showing ways in which Black women experience shame and how they develop defense responses to shame (as a form of resistance), as they grapple with lived experiences of racism, rape, victimization, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and other forms of gender-based violence.



Chairperson: Jordan Stier

*Ezili and the “silent nègre woman”: Survival as Resistance in Nalo Hopkinson’s The Salt Roads*

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At the heart of *The Salt Roads* is Ezili, a Vodoun *lwa* who is brought into existence in Saint Domingue by the prayer and chanting of three slave women while they bury a stillborn child by the riverside. But Ezili has also always existed as a fractal of various African goddesses and she is connected to, and connects, several women of colour across time and space. She moves between the three main streams of the narrative in fourth century Egypt, mid-eighteenth century Saint Domingue, and nineteenth century Paris as if she were “swim[ming] in time as in a stream” (119). This temporal paradox is fundamental to how Hopkinson creates a sense of cautious hope through her depiction of time as fluid, moving backwards and forwards by unseen currents. This paper will explore how Mer, one of the slave women, is able to retain a sense of self through her connection to Ezili, and help her people survive through ‘small’ but significant acts of physical and spiritual healing. Set in the time leading up to the successful slave rebellion in Saint Domingue, Mer’s story demonstrates the crucial role of women in the slave revolt, one which is often overlooked in favour of a focus on violent, male-driven resistance.

*Sexual Autonomy in Okorafor's Who Fears Death*

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In Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, the heroine and her friends undergo the Eleventh Rite, a coming-of-age ritual which culminates in an FGM/C (female genital mutilation/circumcision) procedure where juju that causes a woman to feel pain "whenever she is too aroused... until she's married" (57) is used. Consequently, women's sexuality is suppressed and put under the control of men. Although the Eleventh Rite contains fantasy elements and the use of magic, it sheds light on similar ways which attempts are made to combat women's sexual autonomy in the real world. This can occur both culturally, whereby women's sexual subordination is made to seem natural, and physically through practices such as FGM/C that critics such as Qanta Ahmed claim is "the absolute denial of a girl or woman a future as a sexual entity". But why does this occur and who benefits? To better understand the resistance to women's sexual autonomy in both Okorafor's novel and contemporary society I shall look to Roy Baumeister *et al* who propose the Male Control Theory and Female Control Theory to explain the phenomenon of the cultural suppression of women's sexuality. Following this, I shall discuss Andrea Dworkin's iconic text *Intercourse* to explore whether her ideas on how the control of women's sexuality permeates society elucidate the Eleventh Rite ritual.

*The use of ritual as a physical and spiritual medium in Buhlebezwe Siwani's visual art performance and its documentation*

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This paper is motivated by a visual art performance and installation that I encountered in 2014. My experience explores Buhlebezwe Siwani's work titled *Inzilo: Ngoba ngilala kwabafileyo* (2014). Siwani makes use of familiar cultural histories where she personifies identity(ies) or positions of isangoma and artist, a delving in narratives that are interpersonal, thus, blurring the lines to the experience and exploration of performance as art and/or life. Joan W. Scott (1992: 37) reminds one that experience is not a word the world can go without because it is part of the everyday language. The word, experience is part of the narratives told about what is happening, what has happened and a claiming of knowledge offered as an evidence of experience. Moreover, experience is an interpretation and is in need to clarify, explain, understand and analyse (Scott 1992).

In my paper, I provide a critical analysis of *Inzilo: Ngoba ngilala kwabafileyo*. I view the performance and installation through memory and documentation, which both become documentary in my paper. In *Inzilo: Ngoba ngilala kwabafileyo*, Siwani shares a common element which is the resemblance of ritual. Through this works, I question: what is ritual and what does it encompass? What has brought influence and attention to the interest of ritual in contemporary art? Is there a line between 'ritual' performance and performance art?

*#BlackGirlMagic in South African literature*

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In contemporary times, there is a strong call for black women to embrace their #BlackGirlMagic as a celebratory and empowering form of identity politics. Yet given this movement's close proximity to neoliberal popular culture, it seems necessary to reconsider what is at stake in marking the black female as the exceptional or fantastic.

Not to be dismissed as a global/American phenomenon, #BlackGirlMagic is germane to contemporary South African fiction also. In Mohale Mashigo's *The Yearning*, Unathi Magubeni's *Nwelezelanga: The Star Child* and Buhle Ngaba's *The Girl Without A Sound*, the central protagonists experience magic as an internal property of their beings and, according to John Murillo III's exploration of the correlation between physics time travel and blackness, there are ways to read #BlackGirlMagic as an affirmative cosmic redefinition of black identity in popular culture.

In each of these novels, I thus explore how the domesticification of magic sets the subject apart and makes them rather special yet we find that there is an equally pervasive representation of the black female fantastic as an anodyne to past trauma. In all of these texts, there is a common inability to cure trauma within the empirical context of the subject; the answers are always beyond the reach of reality which then leads to the recourse to magic. And so, one cannot help but wonder if this is an implicit statement about the current state of hopelessness that a vast population of women must feel in regarding the resolution of their daily South African trauma? Does #BlackGirlMagic merely feed the stereotype of a 'Strong Black Women' who must persevere in a hostile world? And if so, does freedom actually lie in alleviating the black female from the need to be as exceptional – as magical – as this?

**Day Three**

**29 September**

**Keynote Gabeba Baderoon**

*Beyond measure: Creative imaginaries and grounded practices in an African feminist frame*

Chairperson: Lynda Gichanda Spencer

Prof Gabeba Baderoon is the author of *Regarding Muslims: from Slavery to Post-apartheid* (awarded the 2017 National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences Best Non-Fiction Monograph Award) and the poetry collections *The Dream in the Next Body*, *The Museum of Ordinary Life* and *A hundred silences*. She is a recipient of the Daimler Award for South African Poetry and is a member of the editorial board of the African Poetry Book Fund. With Alicia Decker, Baderoon co-directs the African Feminist Initiative at Pennsylvania State University, where she is an Associate Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and African Studies. She is an Extraordinary Professor of English at Stellenbosch University and a Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

## **Session Seven**

### ***Yvonne Vera and African Feminist Praxis***

Chairperson: Rosemary Jolly

*The (small) voice of craft in Yvonne Vera's fiction*

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Descriptions of craft occupy a significant role in Yvonne Vera's fiction. In previous writing I have considered how the structure of one specific craft – textiles – helps map unspoken interactions that occur in their presence. (Hemmings 2008, 2010) But I find myself increasingly uncomfortable with the scale of my previous claims. Instead, I have become interested in recognising that in Vera's writing the purpose of the crafts includes what these objects are unable to do and what the craftsperson is unable to change alongside the enthusiasm with which I previously argued for all that can be understood to say and do. My interest in acknowledging the limitations of craft is driven by a desire to make reasonable claims on behalf of craft's power in an era when modest impact feels like an unwelcome truth in academic research. This paper is interested in acknowledging that within Yvonne Vera's fiction the smallness of craft is also a component of its identity. Much like the communication that can be heard in silence, I suggest that craft also accrues and communicates meaning through its limitations.

*Grief, song and feminist utterance in the patriarchal world of Yvonne Vera's Under the Tongue*

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Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue* is a novel underpinned by the dialogical silences between the male and female characters. Prime amongst these silences is the incestuous rape of the child-protagonist, Zhizha, a rape which is enacted by her father, Muroyiwa, himself a product of the losses which accompany the Rhodesian Bush War around which the novel is set. Following this rape, Zhizha is rendered speechless and it is the journey from her silence to speech which her internal narrative traces. This journey is facilitated by her perpetually singing and storytelling grandmother who is oppressed by the strictures of patriarchy which manifest themselves in interpersonal violence enacted by the men in Zhizha's family. While predominantly associated with darkness and death, the male characters are also linked to language used in the service of their destructive potential which lies in direct opposition to the covenant of words shared by the women in the text. In light of this, my paper is concerned with Vera's use of the literary techniques of silence and song as they pertain to her feminist poetics. I do so by comparing the ways in which interpersonal violence stems not only from colonial and patriarchal oppression, but also from repressed grief which only engenders more of the same in the male characters and the obverse in the female characters.

*African feminism, African humanism and extra-anthropocentric right-making in Yvonne Vera's The Stone Virgins*

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This paper investigates Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (Vera) through an African Feminist revisioning of African Humanism and what I have outlined as extra-anthropocentric human right-making (Jolly). As I have argued in a recent paper (which does not consider Yvonne Vera at all), African Humanism has been, for reasons of its communication through both the English language and post-Enlightenment understandings, or rather misunderstandings, of its proponents, been viewed (mistakenly) within a Cartesian frame work that regards subject/object; human/non-human and human/material (including 'environmental' aspects) as primary. I point out how the recourse to new materialism is profoundly neo-colonial, while simultaneously framing Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* as an artefact that practices extra-anthropocentric human rightness as an African feminist 'descendant' of African Humanism.

I am particularly interested in the non-'living' and 'environmental' subjects of *The Stone Virgins* as exemplary of a fictional practice that manifests what Sylvia Wynter's critique of "the genre of the human" proposes (Wynter). Thus, while Wynter herself does not touch on the categories of the unborn and the ancestors or the 'environment' as subjects in their own right explicitly, although her work indicates the importance of such transgressions of the "genre of the human", Vera does. In this context my paper seeks to critique new-materialist, post-humanist and Anthropocenic vocabularies as insufficiently self-aware of discourses of critical race theory, indigeneity and African feminism; and seeks to understand Vera's text as exemplary in deserting the impoverished and anthropocentric discourse of human rights within a African-feminist, extra-anthropocentric practice of human right-making, where the human as subject can only be healthily envisioned as co-constitutive with the 'environment', the non-living, the ancestral and the material. This points to a very different conception of how to live with human wrongness than anthropocentric discourses of reconciliation.

It is difficult within the confines of an abstract to fight against a certain kind of universalism that both Vera and Wynter contest deeply in their work. To this end, let me further assert the



fact that my reading takes into account the specific history of the Gukurahundi (including the abhorrent association of the word with the cleansing of chaff after the rains have come in Shona) and the particular forms of gendered violence (with an understanding that all violence is gendered) that the neo-colonial context of the state as an agent of liberation undertakes and absorbs.

## *Inactive as Agentivity*

Chairperson: Same Mdluli

*Ukuzenza ngokwenza: a discourse of a black feminist subject.*

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De La Rey, in her essay titled “South African Feminism, race and racism”(1997: 37), asked: “... beyond naming the problem, reworking our theory and research, what does an anti-racist feminism mean for what we do- in our organisations and in our daily lives”?

This question reflects on feminism as site for the making and elaboration of new forms of personhood; of the “new” black in post/transition South Africa. Collaborating with this question, this project is initiated by my interest in asking where one would begin to think if they were not responding and reacting to colonial and apartheid narratives or to the effects of colonialism and apartheid. I also ask about the “new” forms of personhood that would come with answering this question. This project then looks at repositioning thought from a phenomenon that is owned by history, context and locale - to thought existing as “something” that is preserved, hosted by the human as they become what?. In this reading then thought does not come after or before or happens outside and away from the human – one does not precede the other, these two things exist simultaneously.

Everything follows from this principle: that the black subject is not to be reduced to a simple symptomal – resisting, reactionary – subject, but rather that we hear in her what is “unreal”, calling attention to modes of black articulacy previously overlooked. I propose that we rest thought of the black subject to happen in primary language (not language of transformation, recovery, rediscovery, freedom) in order to stage an utterance, not an explanation or analysis. What is proposed, then, are a series of portraits that offer the reader a discursive site: the site of me speaking within and through myself. This reading attends to the enjoyment, relations, pleasure, fantasy, absence, dispossessions, traumas, anxieties, expectations, expenditure, silence, magic, attachments and negotiations attached to making of “new” forms of

personhoods that are formed in journeying to finding narratives that move beyond responding and reacting to colonial and apartheid narratives.

*Silent Victims or Agents of Change? Narratives of widowhood rites and resistance in South Africa, staying put and carrying on.*

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This article explores the ways in which resistance is incorporated into the everyday lives and practices of widowed women in South Africa, theorising the nature of women's everyday resistance in long running social conflicts. The article challenges the view that African widows are silent and helpless victims of patriarchal beliefs and practices. Drawing from life history narratives of 10 South African widows' lived experiences of widowhood rites, the article examines three questions, first, how do black South African widows' dynamic positionings shape their possibilities for negotiation with and resistance to some dehumanising widowhood rites? Secondly, how do women's possibilities for engagement in turn shape the wider community's possibilities for negotiation with or resistance to patriarchy? Finally, what are the strategies that widows employ to resist widowhood rites? As its mainstay, the article emphasises that widows' resistance is not concerned with large scale protests or overt activism and the spectacular, but rather depends on daily subtle resistance and resilience in, often fractured local communities. In particular, the analysis is hinged on exploring how black African widows exercise their agency, their silence being one of their chosen forms of resistance to challenge and question patriarchal domination. Insights are drawn from the critical feminist concept of intersectionality and brought into conversation with concepts of symbolic and cultural violence and hegemony to illuminate the arguments of the paper. A feminist narrative approach is deployed to analyse the findings and show that some of the black women's experiences are informed by their socio-cultural realities and their lives are shaped by the unique intersection between race, gender and social class. The article argues that culture, patriarchy, tradition, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in isolation; rather they come into existence in and through relations with each other.

*Cultural and Religious Factors as Catalysts of Patriarchal Hegemony and the Plight of Women in Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter*

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Traditionally in Africa as a patriarchal society, one of the ways of measuring the wealth of a man is by the number of women he is able to marry and take care and their children.

Colonization of African countries brought significant changes to Africans' attitude on polygamy. The unjust patriarchal system enforces gender roles which are oppressive to the females and give the power to predominate in political, moral and social leaderships to the males. Many African feminist writers have presented the emancipation of women by highlighting the problems women encounter in Africa where women have few rights.

Through Gender Studies, this paper exposes men's infidelity as part of religious dogma and the problems polygamy causes in families. It aims at reviving gender equality through the acquisition of western education.

*Teacher don't teach me nonsense*

Chairperson: Nontobeko Ntombela

*The Role of Feminisms in the Transformation Agenda for institutions of higher learning in South Africa*

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In South Africa's recent call for a workable transformational agenda at institutions of higher learning, it is necessary to avoid the replication of patriarchal practices that typified both the colonial and post-colonial project in Africa. In attending to a truly transformational and (de)colonial agenda, an understanding of the relationship between colonialism and patriarchy and the epistemic confusions that arise is essential. For South Africa to march triumphantly into a project of epistemic emancipation, careful attention needs to be paid to learning how to unpick the entanglements between patriarchy and the postcolonial project. In this paper it is argued that a critical starting point is using feminist theories to activate change. It is only when we can begin to understand the symbiotic nature of colonialism and patriarchy that we can, in earnest, begin a programme of transformation at institutions of higher learning. The exclusion of a multiplicity of contributions and agendas is symptomatic of patriarchal toxicity within the movement. To come to terms with this glaring fault of post-coloniality, this paper calls into favour a series of feminist theories that are necessary in understanding the permutations of patriarchal practice and how we can begin an honest dismantling of its exclusionary politics. What is argued is that the transformational agenda in institutions of higher learning in South Africa are fraught with instances of fragmentation, disruption, and occlusion. At the center of these fractures is the maintenance of patriarchal systems that at the onset displace and marginalize voices, people and perspectives. For South Africa's institutes of higher learning,

in regards to them attending to the agenda for change, it is imperative that judicious attention be made to two expressions of activism on the continent; The historicity of liberation struggle from colonial power and the role of women and girls in that struggle for freedom.

*Addressing gender disparities in Ethiopian higher education: a policy analysis*

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The dominant features of Ethiopian higher education in the past few decades have been massive increase in enrolment and governance and reform measures that accompany it. Some research has already been done into the possible successes, impacts, and challenges of such initiatives on widening access and providing quality higher education in the country. This article attempts to explore one societal challenge- addressing gender inequality and disparity in Ethiopian higher education by investigating how the issue is addressed in policy making and implementation using mainly secondary sources. Theoretical perspectives borrowed from feminist critical policy analysis are used to inform the analysis. The findings indicate that though addressing the issue of considerable gender disparities is enshrined in the documents as a major policy priority, all the documents seem to lack nuance in terms of setting concrete strategies for achieving the broad, and at times vague policy commitments. The policy documents also do not seem to take into account the multiple identities of women and are silent about discussing specific ways in which intersecting structural inequalities might have contributed to the status quo. The policy documents were also found to be lacking in terms of strategically addressing the limited participation of girls and women in STEM fields, and in higher education teaching, research and leadership. It is also not clear to what extent women and women organizations participated in the process of policymaking.



*Memory: The site of intersection is the site of everyday*

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State-owned museums in South Africa have always explicated their institutional role within the framing of national policies on heritage, public education and economic growth. Since 1825, national interest centred on the preservation and representation of the material culture of colonial settlers' conquest and triumph of absolute sovereignty. Museums response to the new national interest has been to insert racial representations of pre-colonialism and historical movements of struggle, resistance and activism within the historical hierarchical racial relationship to the dominant colonial narrative. This affirms the colonial settlers' position of power because this representation "activates or forms the [racialised] subject." In other words, museums' curate the circumstantial context in the form of the dominant colonial narrative for the initiation and formation of the racialised subject. Museums thus curate the material culture that justifies colonialism and apartheid and evidences identities based on race. My interest is in what Nthabiseng Motsemme (2008: 909) calls the "invisible economy," where the "lived experience" of silence creates knowledge in all the spaces around the articulation of words. I intend to perform a "live" Khoisan woman (through installation art of text and artifacts, documented in an audiovisual clip) to explore the crossroads which Jennifer Gonzales (2008: 31) refers to as "the site of intersection" where "unequal power relations and the history of their effects" meet. The body and artifact are explored as the interchangeable "site of memory" signifying the racial identity of everyday.

*Sculpting with Differently Abled Hands – In/Visibilities, Deletions and Absences: Accounting for Slave Women's Lives*

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The place I've called home for the last five years, I discovered, almost by accident, had been a slave lodge. Its history had been artfully deleted from formal records. The farm that existed then, Groot Moddergat (Great Mud Hole), was one of the oldest in Hout Bay in the Cape, dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The clay quarry at Groot Moddergat was the source of clay for bricks used to build Groot Constantia in 1685, among other historic Cape buildings.

This place is no longer a farm, and exists under an entirely different name, its slave history almost entirely erased. As far as we can tell, my partner and I are the first Black people living at the slave lodge since the abolition of slavery. In attempting to find out more about the slaves who lived t/here – who they were; their names; where they came from; what kind of slaving they did; how they died – I found gaps and silences. I deployed bio-mythographic techniques to account for the absences – the potentially unanswerable questions – while we continue to explore archives that may or may not yield answers to our questions.

Through sculpting in clay I began to articulate something visual about the lives of the slave women, if only to explore imagined roots and the routes that led them to the slave lodge at Groot Moddergat.

My paper engages with this journey as well as with art-making as a form of defiance against my disability, reclaiming space for creative expression in the face of pain. It grapples with living and being a Black feminist sculpting with clay and working with words, in an invisibly disabled body.

## Session Eight

### *Art on our Mind: Shelley Barry*

Chairperson: Beverley Barry

Shelley is a multi award-winning filmmaker. In 2018 she received a SAFTA for her contribution to the television and film industry, along with an IBHUKU award for her writing. Her films span across genres and are largely experimental in style and often explores the intersections between sexuality, gender and disability. She often shoots her own films, exploring the aesthetics of cinematography from the perspective of a wheelchair user. Screenings of her work have been held at major festivals and events around the world and been acquired by television, including MTV, DUTV and WYBE in the U.S. and SABC and e-tv in South Africa. New York University is one of the international libraries that has purchased her work. Awards include Best Film awards at international festivals in NYC, Canada, Moscow, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New Jersey for her first film, an experimental documentary titled *Whole-A Trinity of Being*.

Shelley is the founder and director of *twospinningwheels*, a production company that aims to explore new languages in cinema and marginalised voices having access to the craft of film making. She was selected to be on the SA film delegations to MIPCOM, France, The European Film Market, Berlin, The Rio Content Market, Brazil, Cannes, France and The Tribeca Film Festival, New York. Shelley is currently based at the University of Johannesburg where she teaches film and has commenced her Creative PhD in film at the University of the Witwatersrand. This retrospective started to tour South Africa with the Mzansi Women's Film Festival in August 2017.

## Session Nine

### *Digital Technologies: The Revolution will be Tweeted*

Chairperson: Dina Ligaga

#### *Making Their Own Meaning: The Foxy Five and An African City as Women's Localised Narratives*

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In their book *Born Digital*, John Palfrey and Urs Gasser note that “the creative revolution in cyberspace” is partly about “who gets to control the shaping of culture, the making of ‘meaning’.” They continue by observing that “digital technology gives everyone the means to express themselves, and it empowers them to speak – and to be heard by others, including those in power – in ways that previous generations could only have imagined” (125). Johnathan Dockney, Keyan G Tomaselli and Thomas Bongani Hart have pointed out that “new and alternative media systems and practices are increasingly becoming the conduits for alternative power, conceptions of reality and social knowledge in the postmodern world” and that these systems have provided means “to contest media power for self-representation” (“Cellphilms, mobile platforms and prodsumers” 77). This paper examines two web series that use digital media to tell stories about living in Africa from an African perspective. These are localised narratives, or texts that undermine grand political and cultural narratives by telling personal stories. Jabu Nadia Newman’s *The Foxy Five* is a South African web series inspired by the 2015 Fees Must Fall protests, and her use of web videos to tell a semi-autobiographical story of intersectional feminism and black identity illustrates the ways in which digital technology can facilitate localised narratives. Nicole Amarteifio’s *An African City*, which has drawn frequent comparisons to HBO’s *Sex and the City*, was created in response to “the sole narrative of the African woman being about poverty and disease” and is intended to be a narrative “of beauty, glamor and intelligence” (Karimi para. 9). Newman’s and Amarteifio’s use of new media for personal expression and for challenging conventional narrative is expressive of both the postmodern shift away from grand narratives and the way in which the growing digitisation

of Africa is placing agency in the hands of ordinary citizens, and the ways in which African women are seizing these opportunities to tell their own stories.

*Countering the Vulgarly of Power with the 'Vulgarity' of Language: Stella Nyanzi's Facebook Work and the Deconstruction of African Decorum*

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The paper argues that Stella Nyanzi's recourse to the use of what her critics call 'vulgar language' is borne out of the realization that if criticism of Uganda's First Family and its rabid misuse of power is to be heard loudly and clearly, it should not be rendered using what self-appointed moralists (Pentecostal pastors, for instance) consider civil language 'befitting a well-brought up African man or woman', but rather, it should deploy red-hot language that makes the point strongly and bravely, for instance metaphorically calling President Museveni 'a pair of buttocks', shocking as this may sound to the 'civilized' ear. This kind of language, the paper suggests, is forced upon Nyanzi by what the dictatorial regime has done to language – robbing it of its vitality to the extent that the President can make a promise to the electorate during a presidential campaign trail, but care nothing about having it fulfilled the moment the election is 'won'. Using five of Nyanzi's hundreds of Facebook posts, the paper examines the linguistic strategies that this ardent campaigner for democratic rule deploys to hold her President, His Excellency Museveni, and his family members – his wife who is a cabinet minister in the government, for instance – accountable to the citizens of Uganda.

*The student movement and an exploration of the role of multiple identities*

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In post-apartheid South Africa there is limited empirical and theoretical research on the student movement that explores the role of multiple identities. The vast majority of literature on social movements generally focus on a collective rather than seeking to understand movements through a personal identity lens. Literature exploring individual characteristics is important as it will provide insight into how individual characteristics like gender, race, class, sexuality and language shape the movement. Intersectionality provides a framework to explore the relationship between activist's identities. It provides a way of thinking holistically about how different identity characteristics interact in people's lives and the impact it has on social interaction. Intersectionality is also a useful framework with which to understand the postmodern project of conceptualising multiple and shifting identities. Moreover, this framework breaks down different identity markers and explores the intersection within them. These identity markers highlight the characteristics that have meaning to us and the society in which we exist. This paper will focus on the contemporary student movement at the University of Pretoria (UP). The study will borrow this analytical resource to explore the dimensions of identities that students have, and how they view changes of themselves as a result of being involved with the movement. The central research question of this study is in what ways have the recent student movements at the University of Pretoria shaped student's activists identities? The main objectives of this study are (1) to explore different phases in the individuals' lives (2) to analyse different identity markers at play (3) describe the relationship between the student movements and activists identities.

*Let's talk about sex baby...*

Chairperson: Gabeba Baderoon

*Rediscovering the Erotic as Ordinary in Selected South African Short Stories*

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Open: An Erotic Anthology by South African Women Writers, as Karin Schimke argues in her preface, “reopens for South African readers the debate about the representation of sex in literature” (viii). This debate spans issues ranging from the potentially repressive effects of taboo and censorship to the potentially objectifying and exploitative effects of explicit and spectacular depictions of sex. Open provides a range of approaches to depicting sex and the erotic that challenge conventional, patriarchal and heteronormative modes of representation. In my proposed paper, I wish to explore two stories from this anthology – Makhosazana Xaba’s “Inside” and Suzy Bell’s “Mrs Habib’s Hypothalamus” – which I argue, taking a cue from Njabulo Ndebele, frame the erotic as ordinary. They do so by each following the interior perspective of a female character whose everyday life is limned by the erotic. These stories do not contain sex scenes, focusing instead on the building sexual tension between female characters. In my analysis, I draw on Audre Lorde’s “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” in which she defines the erotic beyond the narrow confines of the overtly sexual and extends its relevance into all aspects of everyday life. For Lorde, the erotic stands in opposition to pornography, which “emphasizes sensation without feeling” (54). I argue that “Inside” and “Mrs Habib’s Hypothalamus”, by shifting the focus of the erotic away from the potentially spectacular terrain of explicit sex to the experience of sexual desire framed as ordinary, work to challenge narrow conceptualisations of the erotic that have too often been determined by patriarchal, heteronormative and colonial conceptualisations of black lesbian sexuality.



*Silent No More: Voicing Queerness in African Short Fiction*

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By drawing from recent Queer short story anthologies from Africa, this paper seeks to map out the various ways in which the selected short fiction reconfigures sexuality and gender conception by breaking the silence surrounding the Queer in Africa.

In the *Note from the Editors* of *Queer Africa 2*, Makhosazana Xaba and Karen Martin explain that their intention with their anthology is to “productively disrupt, through the art of literature, the potent discourses currently circulating on what it means to be African, to be [Q]ueer and to be an African creative writer” (2017: 312). Short fiction allows for a plethora of voices to be heard when collected into an anthology and, by dipping into the ocean of recent African short fiction, this paper will use stories from various Queer anthologies from Africa in order to illustrate how they voice the Queer experience in an African context despite continued heteronormative societal policing in their social contexts.

Stories like “Sethunya Likes Girls Better” (2013) by Wame Molefhe, “Watering the Imagination” by Diriye Osman (2013) and “Perilous Love” (2017) by Jennifer Shinta Ayebazibwe make known the experiences of Queers in African and also the nuances associated with acting on Queer desire in an African context. This paper will argue that the selected short fiction is paramount in discussing sexuality and the damages of hetero-patriarchy in relation to social identities. Diriye Osman’s story “Ndambi” (2013), for example, tells the story of a woman who has been rejected by her family for being “a black African Muslim lesbian” (2013: 73). The protagonist embodies her rejected body through masturbation and explains that her Queer body is a site where “[h]ome is in [her] hair, [her] lips, [and in her] arms” (Osman 2013: 74). She embodies herself and in doing so she refutes the notion that her African-ness, her religion and her Queerness are not compatible for if one exists in a body that allows for these intersections, one’s existence cannot be refuted or denied.

Anthologies that forefront Queer narratives from Africa illustrate the subversion of patriarchal heteronormative policing surrounding sexuality and gender conception in African contexts.

This paper seeks to explain why these anthologies are essential in voicing and disseminating Queer narratives from Africa, consequentially, allowing for the historically muted Queer to finally speak in the face of heteronormativity which seeks to silence them.

*Women's conceptualisations of sexual liberation in patriarchal contexts of a democratic South Africa.*

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African women's sexualities are continually plagued by narratives of disease, violence and reproduction and less about sexual pleasure and the erotic. Subsequently, this has successfully provided the Western media and a plethora of NGOs and AIDS organisations with a windfall in reviving the deep-seated colonial prejudices and myths regarding the alleged rampancy of African women's sexual behaviour and diseased sexualities. As a result, the shape and construction of the meanings and definitions of sexuality do not necessarily reflect the realities and experiences of Africa. Following a qualitative research method and a narrative approach, my research project aimed at highlighting that in order for women to experience emancipation in a democratic state such as South Africa, their 'private spaces' need to recognise them as equal citizens and not as 'bodies' whose sexuality needs to be contained in order to maintain patriarchal equilibrium. I draw from a decolonial African-feminist framework and use it as a tool to question, deconstruct and reimagine African sexual cultures. Data is drawn from narratives of 20 women based in the rural community of Schoemansdal in South Africa. Overall, my work is located at the intersections on gender, sexuality and political change intrinsic to understanding the manner in which women experience and conceptualise liberation in contemporary rural South Africa. Women's narratives revealed that throughout history and in contemporary times, patriarchal constructions of gender and sexuality continue to shape and dictate women's lived experiences.

*Language, Female Sexuality and Gender Ideology in Chinelo Okparanta's Under the Udala Trees and Jude Dibia's Walking with Shadows*

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Discussions of female sexuality and gender ideology have a liberating effect on African feminists who are daily fighting to deconstruct heteronormativity and the superiority of the male sex over the female. Starting from the late 2000s, female sexuality and gender ideology have progressively gained scholarly recognition. Language plays an essential role in establishing female sexuality and couching gender ideology in a highly patriarchy society as Africa, and champions a resistance equaling a subversion and inversion of fixed gender roles. Existing studies on contemporary gender-based Nigerian novels have paid scant attention to the role of language in the expression of female sexuality and gender ideologies. Therefore, an investigation of the use of lexical indices and contextual beliefs that characterize and construct gender ideologies and female sexuality in gender-based Nigerian novels is a lacuna that needs to be filled. For data, we have focused on 70 gender-related lexical items gathered from Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (UDT) and Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* (WS). The gender-related lexical items were unequally distributed in the sampled novels: UDT, 38 and WS, 32. These sampled items were classified into word elements, phrasal, clausal and sentence level lexical elements. The analyses are guided by a blend of van Dijk mental model, Lakoff's dominance, and Butler's performance theories in addition to Odebunmi's situation model. In the analyses, we paid attention to how gender ideologies and female sexuality are constructed through lexical indices and contextual beliefs in the Nigerian novels. The study reveals that through the use of lexicalization in the construction of female sexuality and gender ideologies, feminism is gaining prominence and acceptance among many Nigerians. The study orients Nigerians and others to contemporary gender-based Nigerian novels rhetoric and its social functions of resistance and subversion of gender roles.

## *Evening programme*

### *Blackness and feminist solidarities discussion*

Facilitated by Grace A. Musila

This conversation seeks to tease out the intra-racial dynamics that texture feminist solidarity within the Black community. Conventionally, Blackness is often defined in relation to whiteness. This platform asks: what conversations can we have about the workings of race within the Black community in its various shades of Blackness and the attendant cleavages of privilege that attach to particular variants of Blackness? How does the conversation about patriarchy shift when we specifically think about Black patriarchy and its interactions with gendered black subjects? What forms of affirmation and nurturing does intra-racial solidarity facilitate in our confrontations with what bell hooks terms capitalist heteropatriarchy? These and related questions form the focus of this conversation.

*The Coloured Vine*

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Ms Ingrid Nayame is an emerging, award-winning Zambian novelist; and self-published author of two books entitled *The Last Laugh* and *The Coloured Vine* printed in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Her first novel, was nominated in the Author Category of the Stanbic Bank sponsored 2017 Zambian Women of the Year Award. Nominated in the same category in 2018, her second novel scooped the award. She proceeded with a double nomination in the University of Zambia (UNZA) Radios's 2018 *Tell Your Own Story* categories: *Fiction of the Year* and *Best Fiction*, being awarded for the latter. She has also written short stories for leading magazines, newspapers and radio in Zambia.

***The Last Laugh***

Human emotions are stretched to the breaking point in this tale of deceit, love triangles, murder and secrets. It's a fierce race of who will have the last laugh. Is it the Bishop of a thriving Pentecostal church trying to protect his reputation and the church he built? Is it the scorned wife who ends up keeping a secret that would haunt her for life? Is it the husband who cheated on his wife and pays a huge price for what he did? Or is it the Pastor looking for answers behind the shocking secret of his wife's murder? Only one person is determined to defy all odds in the cold face of regret, betrayal, pain, agony and anger in order to move on with a clear conscious...

***The Coloured Vine*** is a story of a distorted generation and a young man searching for identity. Despite the questionable, shameful and humble beginnings of Chisala Sampa, he kept his head high above water regardless of stones thrown at him. Like all life, it never courses in a straight line. While his life was taking turns and corners, his long lost father, Richard Chali, too had his own share of hurdles to negotiate. It was pretty much a parallel course while the two did not know what was going on each other's lives until fate converged the two lives to a common but rough confluence.

*Untitled (Poetry)*

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The presentation shall be a seamless synthesis of poetry, singing, speech, sound, musical instruments as a means of expressing traumatic events that are often experienced by women. Using mbira, violin, drums and guitar, I hope to theatrically perform 3 of my poems: Black Frost, Birthmarks and Mandrakes of rape.

Accompanied by those 4 instruments, I would also like to sing 3 original songs that I wrote in French. I plan to sing the following songs:

1. La xéphonobie fait mal

The title of this song means xenophobia destroys. I wrote this song in response to the xenophobic attacks that happened 5 years ago in South Africa and how being a foreign woman in South Africa intensified my feelings of alienation and abjection.

2. Distant

This song is about an abusive heterosexual relationship.

3. La Guerre

The title of this song means The War. This is a song about political violence and its harmful consequences on society. The song is philosophical and demonstrates that song-writing can be an effective form of activism.

## *Glowfly Dance*

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*‘A scream doesn’t have to be loud. The strongest screams are the ones we hear within us, the ones that twist our organs up and run like a fist through our intestines and ribcages, the ones that have no voice’* – *Glowfly Dance*, p 322 (Jade Gibson, Penguin Random House Umuzi)

I speak to the mute child. Of the silence of the death of a mother that was loved, and the child left to speak. Of the global connectedness of women’s experiences in refuges. The vulnerabilities that society creates. It hurts in the children that grow to become adults, that were the silent witnesses. It hurts in the silent witnessing of the brutalities that impact upon women. When nothing happens. When fingers point at victims instead of perpetrators, who walk free. When society should be pointing at itself.

I will be speaking about my published novel, *Glowfly Dance* (Penguin Random House Umuzi), a true story that explores the meaning of resilience in the face of a man’s oppression, the realities that lead to intimate partner femicide, and the relevance of the book today in talks and readings. A girl child’s voice, now an adult, and the journey into telling, connecting and changing society that I am still working towards. The process, that is ongoing, that needs support and collaboration. Society is still hurting, because told stories need to reach the public. Women are killed by intimate male partners because we fail to talk, and fail to see. *Glowfly Dance* is a journey of seeing. I will talk of my work – with the vision of getting others to see. These are the links to *Glowfly Dance*, its vision, and a girl child’s story.



*Phala*

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Drawing on Nthabiseng Motsemme's (2004) argument on how the space of "imagination-as-generator" allows for the "invention of the self [that] can go beyond the limits of available oppressive representations", the creative engagement responds to oppressive representation of black women. Through an imaginative and self-invention framework, *Phala* explores a black woman's journey to self-discovery and super-power realisation. This Afrocentric comic book idea maps out a story of a black female superhero in contemporary South Africa. Positioned as a black African feminist, *Phala*'s character echoes social issues relevant to what it means to be a black woman in contemporary South Africa, and she challenges ideals of beauty standards, family pressure, socio-political belonging.

Recognising that *Phala*'s story is not an individual one, we explore how South African women deal and respond to challenges and horrors that cannot be articulated in words. We therefore, have consulted media stories that previously captured South Africa's attention by shedding lighting into some of our society's oppressive practices found in institutions such as schools, universities and family/community structures. We challenge oppressive representations of black women in term of beauty standards by reclaiming black women's hair as political activism. We respond by making *Phala*'s hair the source of her superpower; thus, we are

intentional about how present black women's hair beyond the limits of western representations. Thus, the hair has the power to respond when Phala cannot express herself through words.

Moreover, to establish the 'enemy' that Phala is fighting, we consulted news stories on black women who have made headlines for fighting injustices when the law failed them, or the system was too patriarchal to recognise that a mute woman also speaks. Hence, we call her Phala, which means whistle. Here we present the audience with a preliminary storyboard that captures the essence of who Phala is. We, therefore invite the audience to engage with Phala through a three-Dimensional visual imagery presentation that will include media articles and sources that have inspired the characters and events in the comic book.

This comic book will contribute to the growing field of black African comic books as non-formal education resources, and it adds to the creative arts field that celebrates collaborative storytelling in contemporary South Africa. Furthermore, it provides a creative framework in which African Feminism can be articulated in the arena of comic books for entertainment, as a predominantly western and eastern discourse.